

In the Claims

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Currently amended) A method for cross marketing products between a first company and a second company engaged in a bilateral cross-marketing relationship, the method performed over an interconnected plurality of point-of-sale terminals and a server, the method and comprising the steps of:

identifying the purchase of the first product of a first company by a particular consumer at a first point-of-sale terminal and storing an indication of the purchase of the first product in a database on the server;

at the first company, conditioning the grant of a discount for a second product at a second company on the purchase of the first product at the first company; and

at the second company, offering for sale the second product if the particular consumer makes a purchase of the first product;

at the second company, querying the database to determine if the particular consumer has purchased the first product and standing ready to accept the discount on the second product;

calculating and recording an amount of cross-marketing revenue realized from the first purchase to a marketing fund account in the database; and

allocating at least a portion of the cross-marketing revenue in the fund to reimburse the second company for the discount.

2. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the step of conditionally granting a discount comprises:

at a first company, conditioning the grant of a 100% discount for a second product at a second company on the purchase of a first product at the first company.

3. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the step of conditionally granting a discount comprises:

at a first company, conditioning the grant of a less-than-100% discount for a second product at a second company on the purchase of a first product at the first company.

4. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:
recognizing the purchase of the first product at the first company by a consumer; and
crediting an account of the consumer with the discount.
5. (Previously presented) The method of claim 3, further comprising the step of:
notifying the consumer of the discount.
6. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:
recognizing the purchase of the first product at the first company and the grant of a discount; and
in response, depositing a predetermined amount of property in the account.
7. (Previously presented) The method of claim 6, wherein the step of depositing comprises:
depositing a predetermined percentage of revenue realized from the purchase of the first product.
8. (Previously presented) The method of claim 6, wherein the step of depositing comprises:
depositing money.
9. (Previously presented) The method of claim 6, wherein the step of depositing comprises:
depositing a predetermined amount of property into an account for the benefit of the second company.
10. (Previously presented) The method of claim 6, wherein the step of depositing comprises:
depositing a predetermined amount of property into an account for the benefit of the second company in at least partial compensation for accepting the discount.

11. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of:
at the second company, selling the second product, accepting the discount on the second product.

12. (Previously presented) The method of claim 10, further comprising the steps of:
at a third company, conditioning the grant of a second discount for the second product at the second company on the purchase of a third product at the third company; and
at the second company, standing ready to accept the second discount on the second product,
wherein the step of selling comprises accepting the discount and the second discount on the second product.

13. (Currently amended) A method for cross marketing products between a first company and a second company engaged in a bilateral cross-marketing relationship, the method performed over an interconnected plurality of electronic sales terminals and a server, the method and comprising the steps of:

at a first company, conditioning the grant of a promotional discount value for a second product at a second company on a purchase of a first product at the first company;
recognizing the purchase of the first product at one of the plurality of electronic sales terminals at the first company by a consumer and the grant of a discount;
crediting an account of the consumer maintained at the server with the discount;
notifying the consumer of the discount;
depositing a predetermined amount of money into an account maintained at the server for the benefit of the second company in at least partial compensation for accepting the discount; and
at the second company, offering for sale the second product and standing ready to accept the promotional discount value on the second product,
wherein the amount of money deposited into the account is a predetermined percentage of revenue realized from the purchase of the first product.

14. (Previously presented) The method of claim 13, further comprising the steps of:

at a third company, conditioning the grant of a second discount for the second product at the second company on the purchase of a third product at the third company;

at the second company, standing ready to accept the second discount on the second product; and

at the second company, selling the second product, accepting the discount and the second discount on the second product.

15. (Canceled)

16. (Currently amended) A method for cross marketing products between a first department and a second department at a company using an electronic sales terminal and a server coupled by an electronic communications link, wherein the first and second departments are engaged in a bilateral cross-marketing relationship, the method comprising the steps of:

at a company, conditioning the grant of a discount at one of a plurality of sales terminals for a second product at a second department within the company on a purchase at the same or a different one of the plurality of sales terminals of a first product at a first department of the company;

recognizing the purchase of the first product at the first department by a consumer and the grant of a discount;

crediting an account of the consumer maintained on the server with the discount;

notifying the consumer of the discount;

depositing a predetermined amount of money into an account maintained on the server for the benefit of the second department in at least partial compensation for accepting the discount; and

at the second department, offering for sale the second product and standing ready to accept the discount at the same or a different one of the plurality of sales terminals on the second product, wherein the money deposited into the account for the benefit of the second department amounts to a predetermined percentage of revenue realized from the purchase of the first product.

17. (Currently amended) A method for cross marketing products between a first company and a second company engaged in a bilateral cross-marketing relationship, the method performed over an interconnected plurality of point-of-sale terminals and a server, ~~the method~~ and comprising the steps of:

at a first company, conditioning the grant of a promotional discount value for a second product at a second company on a purchase of a first product at the first company; and

at the second company, offering for sale the second product and standing ready to accept the promotional discount value on the second product;

the method further including:

identifying the purchase of the first product by a particular consumer at a first point-of-sale terminal;

sending first purchase data identifying at least the first product from the first point-of-sale terminal in substantially real-time to the server;

comparing the first purchase with qualifying cross-marketing purchases, and if the first purchase includes at least one qualifying first company cross-marketing product, then: (i) awarding the promotional discount value associated with that first purchase to an account identified with the particular consumer, and (ii) transferring an indication of the awarded promotional discount value back to the first point-of-sale terminal and printing the indication of the promotional discount value on a receipt issued to the consumer at the first point-of-sale terminal for that purchase; and

recording an amount of the cross-marketing revenue realized from at least the first purchase to a marketing fund account.

18. (Previously presented) The method in claim 17, wherein the marketing fund account is structured to defray the second company's costs in dispensing products in conjunction with a promotional value earned by the purchase of the first company's products, and the first company's costs in dispensing the products in conjunction with a promotional value earned by the purchase of the second company's products.

19. (Previously presented) The method in claim 17, wherein the server further includes a marketing engine.
20. (Previously presented) The method in claim 17, further comprising:
- identifying the purchase of a second product by the particular customer from the second company at a second point-of-sale terminal;
 - sending second purchase data identifying at least the second product from the second point of sale terminal in substantially real-time to the server;
 - comparing the particular customer account stored promotional value with a required promotion value redemption threshold on the server; and
 - if the consumer account stored promotional value is high enough to permit redemption of a promotion, then permitting the consumer to redeem a promotion based on their promotion value for the second company product.
21. (Previously presented) The method in claim 17, wherein the promotional value comprises a number of award points.
22. (Previously presented) The method in claim 17, wherein the amount recorded into the marketing fund comprises a percentage of the revenue realized from the first purchase.
23. (Previously presented) The method as in claim 17, further including receiving an consumer account inquiry from a consumer at a point-of-sale terminal at the store of a company participating in the cross-marketing.
24. (Previously presented) The method as in claim 17, further comprising receiving a consumer's unique identification number at the beginning or a sales transaction or an account inquiry transaction.
25. (Previously presented) The method as in claim 17, wherein the server is an in-store server.

26. (Previously presented) The method as in claim 17, wherein the server comprises an out-of-store external server.